



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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October 5, 2009

Dear Community Partners:

This fall, the H1N1 (swine flu) virus that first appeared last spring is expected to make large numbers of people ill and may strain community and health care resources. The Washington State Department of Health, local health agencies, and health care providers must work together to limit the impact of this new flu on our communities.

Although most people who get H1N1 will become mildly ill, some are more vulnerable. Pregnant women, infants, young children, and people with certain chronic illnesses are at higher risk. Others are vulnerable because they are isolated, need extra support, or are difficult to reach with important information. Some examples are those who are culturally or geographically isolated, people with physical or developmental disabilities, residents of nursing homes and other chronic care facilities, and people who have difficulty understanding English.

Please help us make sure that everyone in our state gets the information they need to avoid the flu and help lessen the effect of H1N1 on communities and the healthcare system. You can do this by promoting planning partnerships with your local public health department, emergency management agency, and other community organizations.

Here is some planning and communication materials you may find useful:

- *The At-Risk Populations and Pandemic Influenza: Planning Guidance for State, Territorial, Tribal and Local Health Departments*, prepared by the Association of State and Territorial Health Officers (ASTHO), provides information on model approaches, sample tools and materials, and guidance on collaborating with public health partners. www.astho.org/Programs/Infectious-Disease/At-Risk-Populations/At-Risk-Pop-and-Pandemic-Influenza-Planning-Guidance/
- *The Washington State Emergency Resource Guide* includes information on emergency planning for children and individuals with medical needs, and providing emotional care in an emergency. The guide is available in print in Spanish and individual fact sheets can be downloaded in multiple languages. www.doh.wa.gov/phepr/factsheets.htm.
- *The Washington Multicultural Health Communications Directory*, produced by the Governor's Commission on Health Disparities in May 2009, provides county-level information on the location of racial/ethnic communities, community organizations, and other trusted sources that can serve as information conduits, and specific cultural and linguistic needs of the communities. The directory is on the commission Web site under

“Publications.” www.healthequity.wa.gov/.

- The state Department of Health H1N1 Web site (www.doh.wa.gov/h1n1/) includes CDC guidance and answers to frequently asked questions (updated weekly).
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Interim Guidance for Homeless and Emergency Shelters on the Novel Influenza A (H1N1) Virus
www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance/homeless.htm.

Thank you for your help addressing the emergency preparedness needs of all people in Washington. If you have questions or suggestions, please contact Margaret Hansen, Department of Health at-risk population's coordinator, at 360-236-4026 or margaret.hansen@doh.wa.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Maxine Hayes, MD, MPH".

Maxine Hayes, MD, MPH
State Health Officer